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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 001196

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: TFH01: ZELAYA ADVISORS ACKNOWLEDGE PRAGMATISM ON
ELECTIONS WOULD HELP THEIR CAUSE

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 1184

[1](#)B. TEGUCIGALPA 1154

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reasons 1.4 (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador met with top Zelaya advisors Jorge Arturo Reina, Rodil Rivera Rodil and Victor Meza on November 19. Key to the discussion was Zelaya's expressed willingness in the November 17 meeting to accept a post-election restoration vote in the Congress. The Ambassador explained that the two-track U.S. position to resolve the crisis was support for full implementation of the Tegucigalpa-San Jose Accord, especially the core element of restoring the democratic and constitutional order, and allowing the election process to proceed without disruption because the Honduran people had the right to select their next leaders, even in the current political environment. The Ambassador said Zelaya had harmed his own prospects for restoration with his statements against the Accord. Zelaya's advisors agreed that a more nuanced approach toward elections would be the best way toward restoration after the elections, because it would build goodwill with the president-elect and Congress. They agreed the post-election process would take time, and that even the declared December 2 date for Congress to vote on restoration must be seen as flexible. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Building on the positive discussion held between the Ambassador, PDAS Kelly and Zelaya on November 17, the Ambassador met with key Zelaya advisors Reina, Rivera and Meza on November 19. The Ambassador explained Zelaya's willingness to accept a vote on his restoration after the elections was a key step forward in reaching a resolution of the political crisis. The Ambassador noted that Zelaya's statements that the Accord was dead and that he would not recognize the November 29 elections had made progress more difficult, and did not further Zelaya's goal of restoration. The Ambassador acknowledged that Zelaya had reason to be concerned in light of Micheletti's own public statements regarding the Accord. He explained that Zelaya could help his cause by taking a more nuanced approach, saying the Accord was good, but criticizing Micheletti for failing to implement it. The Ambassador noted that by taking this approach, Zelaya could create room for elections to take place and for the president-elect to play a role in full implementation of the Accord. He noted that he had spoken to all five remaining presidential candidates, and none of them wanted to receive the presidential sash from Micheletti.

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador stressed that the U.S. strategy to

resolve the political rift was a two-track approach. First, the United States continued to work toward full implementation of the Accord, especially the core principle of restoring the democratic and constitutional order, and the central element of that was restoration of the constitutional president. Obviously, the Ambassador noted that as agreed to in the Accord, Congress would have the final say on restoration. The second track was to ensure the Honduran people's right to select their next leaders through the holding of free, fair and transparent elections. He said the United States supported the technical process of carrying out elections to that end, while continuing to express concerns over the political environment in which elections would be held if the de facto regime were still in power. The Ambassador said that Zelaya could be a force for reconciliation by supporting the election process and, if a clear winner resulted, acknowledging the winner as the president-elect. The Ambassador said this would foster an environment in which the president-elect could encourage full implementation of the accord and restoration of Zelaya for the sake of resolving the crisis. The Ambassador noted that furthermore, the Congress would be able to make a more logical decision that likely favored Zelaya as well.

¶4. (C) Reina responded that the Ambassador's assessment was exactly correct and logical. He said that to obstruct elections now would be to turn the political environment against restoration. Reina noted that frontrunner National Party candidate Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo was more likely to be open to supporting restoration, given his better relationship with Zelaya than Liberal Party candidate Elvin Santos. Meza

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stated that the November 17 meeting had been the most productive in weeks. He added that he understood the December 2 date Congress had announced for deciding Zelaya's restoration was not fixed, but rather was a statement of intent. He acknowledged a vote would have to come after election results were clear. He recalled that in the 2005 elections, the final vote count had taken days, and losing candidate Lobo had taken almost a month to concede to Zelaya.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador noted that he was reaching out quietly to all the presidential candidates to encourage them to take a constructive approach following elections and to be open to restoration.

¶6. (C) The Ambassador said that there also remained a door open to building a government of national unity. He said the United States understood Zelaya's desire not to submit names in light of Micheletti's own public statements that were not in the spirit of the accord. He noted that with a unity government in place, the elections could take place out of the de facto regime's shadow, and the political environment for the Congress to vote on restoration would be more favorable to Zelaya.

¶7. (C) Comment: The meeting built on the positive elements of Zelaya's November 17 meeting with the Ambassador and PDAS Kelly, and all of Zelaya's advisors expressed agreement in the proposed approach as the best way forward to promote restoration. All four appeared open to supporting the election process in order to create an environment that would foster a resolution of the political crisis and restoration of Zelaya following elections. The mood among them was upbeat in comparison to previous meetings. Nevertheless, Zelaya continually undermines his advisors and regularly uses unhelpful public statements that undermine confidence and increase his opponents fears about his true intentions, and strengthens their reluctance to having him return to power. End Comment.

LLORENS